"Black Christian Churches in the United States" **
Religion 270
Spring 2018

MWF: 9:00 - 9:50AM

Instructor:

Cleve V. Tinsley IV
Humanities 328
Phone: (609) 638-1178
Office hours: Fridays 10:00AM-12:30 PM or by appointment

DESCRIPTION

Historically, Black Christian Churches have shaped and intitiated much of what has taken place within Black communities. As the first institutions in the United States developed and controlled by Black Americans, these churches are major resources for those interested in understanding religious expression and socio-political activism within the Black community. Using lectures, videos, and case studies, this course provides an introduction into the history, thought, and worship of the major Black denominations. Near the end of the semester, some attention will be given to the presence of African Americans within predominately White denominations.

COURSE OUTCOMES

After completion of the course you should be able to discuss and explain the following:

1) The social and historical contexts that gave rise to Black Christian expressions of faith in the United States.
2) The major denominations that comprise the "Black Church" tradition and its distinctiveness within the larger Christian Protestant tradition.
3) The significance of Worship and Ritual in Black Christian expressions.
4) The contemporary challenges facing Black Christian Churches in the US.

REQUIREMENTS

Students are responsible for the following:

1) Participation (Includes consistent attendance, and informed questions/comments during formal discussion days: 20% of final grade).

2) In-class Mid-term examination (Covers first half of the course materials: 30% of final grade).

3) In-class Second examination (Covers second half of the course materials: 30% of final grade).

4) Group Project: Each student will be assigned to a work group. Each group will select one church and *will attend the church's Sunday service (as a group) a minimum of three times during the semester*. Each group will give a class presentation on its particular church. (Each member of the group must participate in the class presentation.) The nature/length of the class presentation will be discussed early in the semester. (20% of the final grade).

REQUIRED READINGS

1) Required for Class:

- Kelly Brown Douglass, What's Faith Got to Do With It?
- Anthony Pinn, The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era
- Gayraud Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism
- Henry Mitchell, Black Preaching
- R. Drew Smith and Frederick C. Harris, Black Churches and Local Politics

2) Work Groups Readings:

James Cone, Black Theology
James Evans, We Have Been Believers
Farajaje-Jones, "Breaking Silence..." In James Cone/Gayraud Wilmore, Black Theology Volume II
Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent
Joseph Holloway, Africanisms in American Culture
William Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree
Walter Pitts, Old Ship of Zion
Albert Raboteau, Slave Religion
Albert Raboteau, Fire in the Bones, "Minority within a minority..."
Milton Sernett, Afro-American Religious History
Peter Paris, The Social Teachings of the Black Church
Revised Standard Version Bible
James Campbell, Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa.
Leroy Fitts, A History of Black Baptists.
Cheryl J. Sanders, Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS (subject to change)
Note: The amount of reading required changes over the course of the semester. As a way of managing your time, remember that readings should be done in time for discussion days and the two exams.

WEEK ONE

1) January 8

I. Setting the Context

Intro Lecture (Tinsley): "Black Religion and the Black Church: An Interpretive History and Framing"

2) January 10

Lecture (Tinsley): "The Making of Black Christians" –Part I

Readings: Wilmore, Black Religion, Chs. 2-3
Raboteau, Slave Religion, Chs. 2-3 - supplemental

3) January 12

Lecture (Tinsley): "The Making of Black Christians"—Part II

Readings: Sernett, Afro-American Religious History, 63-68 –supplemental
Paris, The Social Teachings, Ch. 1

WEEK TWO

4) January 15

Lecture (Tinsley): "'Africanisms' in Black Christianity: Early Evidence"

Readings: Holloway, Africanisms in American Culture, 1-18 - supplemental
Pitts, Old Ship of Zion, Ch. 4 – supplemental

5) January 17

II. Independent Black Churches

Lecture (Tinsley): "Content and Context of the Black Church" –Part I

Readings: Wilmore, Black Religion, Ch. 4
Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree, Ch. 2 – supplemental

6) January 19

Lecture (Tinsley): "Content and Context of the Black Church" –Part II

Readings: DuBois, "Of the Faith of Our Fathers", Souls of Black Folk, supplemental

WEEK THREE

7) January 22

Lecture (Tinsley): "The Structure and Goal of Black Churches: Independence"—Part I

Readings: Wilmore, Black Religion, Ch. 5
Paris, The Social Teachings, Chs. 2-3 - supplemental

8) January 24

Lecture (Tinsley): "The Structure and Goal of Black Churches: Independence"—Part II

Readings: Wilmore, Black Religion, Ch. 5
Paris, The Social Teachings, Chs. 2-3 - supplemental

9) January 26

Film

WEEK FOUR

10) January 29

Discussion

11) January 31

Guest Lecture by Dr. Jonathan Chism: "Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord"

Readings: Boles, Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord, TBA

12) February 2

Lecture (Tinsley): "What They Believe: Bible, Jesus, and a loving God" – Part I

Readings: Revised Standard Version Bible, Gospel of Matthew, Acts of the

Apostles.
Evans, We Have Been Believers, Chs. 1-3 - supplemental
Cone, Black Theology, pp. 37-39; 323-338 - supplemental

WEEK FIVE

13) February 5

Lecture (Tinsley): "What They Believe: Bible, Jesus, and a loving God" – Part II

Readings: Revised Standard Version Bible, Gospel of Matthew, Acts of the Apostles.
Evans, We Have Been Believers, Chs. 1-3 - supplemental
Cone, Black Theology, pp. 37-39; 323-338 - supplemental

III. Major Black Denominations

14) February 7

Lecture (Tinsley): "Baptist Churches" –Part I

Readings: Lincoln, The Black Church, Ch. 2
Select one chapter from Leroy Fitts, A History of Black Baptists.

15) February 9

NO SCHEDULED CLASSES—SPRING RECESS

WEEK SIX

16) February 12

Lecture (Tinsley): "Baptist Churches" –Part II

Readings: Lincoln, The Black Church, Ch. 2
Select one chapter from Leroy Fitts, A History of Black Baptists.

17) February 14

Lecture (Tinsley): "Methodist Churches"—Part I

Readings: Select a chapter from James Campbell, Songs of Zion.

18) February 16

Lecture (Tinsley): "Methodist Churches"—Part II

Readings: Select a chapter from James Campbell, Songs of Zion.

WEEK SEVEN

19) February 19

Lecture (Tinsley): "Pentecostal Churches" – Part I

Readings: Select one chapter from Cheryl J. Sanders, Saints in Exile
Lincoln, The Black Church, Ch. 4.

20) February 21

Lecture (Tinsley): "Pentecostal Churches" – Part II

Readings: Select one chapter from Cheryl J. Sanders, Saints in Exile
Lincoln, The Black Church, Ch. 4.

21) February 23

Review and Q & A for Midterm Exam

WEEK EIGHT

22) February 26

Midterm Examination

23) February 28

Guest Lecture: "Outside the Historically Black Denominations: Chapelwood UMC/Upper Room"

Readings: Raboteau, "Minority within a Minority..."
Other readings: TBA

IV. Worship and Ritual: Singing, Dancing, and Preaching

24) March 2

Film

WEEK NINE

25) March 5

Guest Lecture: Pastor Juanita Rasmus: "Worship & Spirituality in the African American Church"

Readings: TBA

26) March 7

Guest Lecture by Dr. Tony McNeill, TSU Director of Choirs : "Worship and Music in African American Church Traditions"
Readings: TBA

27) March 9

Lecture (Tinsley): "Making a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"
Readings: Mitchell, Black Preaching, Chs. 1-3,

WEEK TEN

28) March 12

No class – Spring Break

29) March 14

No class – Spring Break

30) March 16

No class – Spring Break

WEEK ELEVEN

31) March 19

Guest Lecturer (Dr. John J. Cox, Brookhollow Baptist Church): "Preaching the Word"
Readings: Mitchell, Black Preaching, Chs. 6-9

32) March 21

IV. Narrowing in on the Contemporary Scene

Guest Lecture: "Hierarchies within the Black Church: Sexism and Homophobia"
Readings: Sernett, Afro-American Religious History, 164-184
Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent, Ch. 1
Farajaje-Jones, "Breaking Silence..."
Douglass, Chs. 1-2
Pinn, Ch. 6.

33) March 23

Guest Lecture: "Hierarchies within the Black Church: Sexism and Homophobia"
Readings: Sernett, Afro-American Religious History, 164-184
Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent, Ch. 1
Farajaje-Jones, "Breaking Silence..."
Douglass, Chs. 1-2
Pinn, Ch. 6.

WEEK TWELVE

34) March 26

Lecture (Tinsley): "Challenges & Changes in the Black Church"
Readings: Wilmore, Black Religion, Ch.s 6-9
Paris, The Social Teachings, Ch. 4 – supplemental
Pinn, The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era, Chs. 4-5

35) March 28

Guest Lecturers/Co-lecture: "Social Activism and the Black Church"
Readings: TBA

36) March 30

Guest Lecturers/Co-lecture: "The Movement for Black Lives and the Black Church"
Readings: TBA

WEEK THIRTEEN

37) April 2

Guest Lecturer: "Politics and the Black Church"
Readings: TBA

38) April 4

Co-Lecture with Special Guest: "Black Church Faith Based Initiatives: Servicing others: A Case Study on 'The Bread of Life, Inc.'"
Readings: TBA

39) April 6

Co-Lecture with Special Guest: "Faith Based Initiatives: "Perspectives on Service *to* Black Communities"
Readings: TBA

WEEK FOURTEEN

40) April 9

Guest Lecturer: "The Megachurch Phenomenon"
Readings: TBA

41) April 11

Class Presentations

42) April 13

Class Presentations

WEEK FIFTEEN

43) April 16

Class Presentations

44) April 18

Last Class - Wrap-up

45) April 20

Optional Final Exam Q & A and Course Review

**If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with the Disability Support Services Office in the Ley Student Center